

# VF - Tsushima

RUSO-JAPANESE WAR, 1904-1905

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days of fighting (March 6-8), the Russian right flank had been pushed back so far that Kuropatkin feared for his line of communications. He disengaged in workmanlike manner and fell back on Tieling (Teihling) and Harbin, defeated but not routed. Some 100,000 Russians had fallen; much matériel was abandoned. Japanese losses were 70,000 or more. There was no further concerted action on land.

## The Naval Campaign of Tsushima

1904, October 15-1905, May 26. Voyage of the Baltic Fleet. Commanded by incapable Admiral Zinovy P. Rozhdestvenski, the Baltic Fleet left its home ports of Revel (Tallin) and Libau (Liepaja). It met its first mishap a few days later in the North Sea, where a false alarm of Japanese torpedo attack brought down a hail of Russian gunfire on a British fishing fleet near Dogger Bank. Several British trawlers were damaged, at least 7 fishermen killed. This incident almost brought war with Britain, and British cruisers trailed the Russian armada until it had passed the Bay of Biscay. Two battleships and 3 cruisers were detached to pass through the Suez Canal, while the main body went around the Cape of Good Hope. Problems of coaling and repairs in neutral ports continually vexed the Russians' creaking progress. Reuniting at Madagascar, after a prolonged delay, the fleet finally started across the Indian Ocean (March 16). One last stop was made at Van Fong Bay in French Indochina, where the Russians prepared for battle. Then heading for Vladivostok, and accompanied by supply ships and colliers, the fleet sailed north (May 14). As it approached Tsushima Strait, Rozhdestvenski's fleet comprised 8 battleships, 8 cruisers, 9 destroyers, and several smaller craft. Although imposing in paper strength, the force was a conglomeration of obsolescent or obsolete vessels, whose personnel was inferior in gunnery, discipline, and leadership to Togo's waiting fleet, which consisted of 4 battleships, 8 cruisers, 21 destroyers, and 60 torpedo boats.

1905, May 27. Battle of Tsushima. Rozhdestvenski entered the strait in line-ahead formation. To the northwest, Togo was

steaming in similar formation. Both admirals led their respective main bodies—Rozhdestvenski in *Suvorov*, Togo in *Mikasa*. The Japanese turned to head north-east, hoping by superior speed to cross the Russian "T." Rozhdestvenski altered course to the northeast and then east, to avoid being raked. The action opened in early afternoon at 6,400 yards' range. Togo, at 15-knot speed, overhauled the 9-knot Russians and in less than 2 hours put 2 battleships and a cruiser out of action. The toll mounted as Togo brilliantly maneuvered his faster force around the hapless Russians. By nightfall, Rozhdestvenski had been wounded, 3 battleships (including his flagship) were sunk, and the surviving Russians, now under Admiral Nebogatov, were fleeing in confusion. Togo turned loose Kamimura's armored cruisers, the destroyers, and the torpedo boats to harry the exhausted Russians through the night. Next day, the destruction was completed. One cruiser and 2 destroyers escaped, to reach Vladivostok; 3 destroyers got to Manila and internment. The remainder of the Russian fleet was sunk or captured. The Japanese lost 3 torpedo boats. Russian casualties mounted to 10,000 killed and wounded; the Japanese lost less than 1,000 men in all.

## Conclusions

1905, September 6. Treaty of Portsmouth, N.H. Both sides were ready to make peace. Japan's limited war objectives had been won, while Russia, seething with internal discontent, had no stomach for continuing. Through the efforts of President Theodore Roosevelt, peace negotiations led to a treaty. Russia surrendered Port Arthur and one-half of Sakhalin, and evacuated Manchuria. Korea was recognized as being within Japan's sphere of influence.

COMMENT. *Tactically, the war on land made plain the enormous defensive value of the machine gun and the offensive value of indirect artillery fire. Strangely, western observers failed to grasp fully the lesson of the machine gun. The Russian soldier once more proved his stoic courage in adversity, regardless of the incapacity of most of his officers. The Japanese displayed considerable professional skill and fanatical devotion to duty. The Battle of Tsushima—first and last great*

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Dupuy, R. Ernest  
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